Problems of Women's Liberation

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The world in the last thousand years has been a world constructed by class hierarchy and dominated by men. To make the world better, we need to eliminate the system of male domination and practice equality so men and women will share the world together. All these changes begin with women's liberation.

For thousand of years, China's social structure forced women to be submissive slaves. In ancient times, women were treated as men's property. To prevent licentiousness, men established moral teachings that emphasized the difference between the sexes. Over time, the difference between males and females was seen as natural law. Women were confined to their private quarters, seldom could they travel, women's responsibility has been limited to raising children and managing the household.

Chinese religion believes that descendents contain the ancestors' spirits. so people think propagation is a way to achieve immortality. The Chinese political system treats offspring as property, so people consider procreation as a means to obtain wealth. Therefore, with both religion and the political system supporting men's sexual indulgence, men treat women as a tool for human breeding. Moreover, Chinese men are seldom willing to deal with trivial household chores; instead, they have women do all the physical labour as well as care for the children. There are other causes that make raising children and managing the household women's lifelong career. Firstly, men treat women as their private property. Secondly, the low living standard in pre-modern times made men's labour alone enough to fe ed the family, so women of well-off families seldom had work other than raising children and managing the household. So all vices of slavery and idleness gather around women. Only in poor families do women often rely on themselves fo r living. They work in the fields; they are hired as maids; at worst, they become prostitutes. For those women, although they are physically less confined, they never achieve spiritual liberation. Indeed, those who obtain physical liberation are actually the most exploited, the most humiliated, and the most degraded.

Men want to avoid women's liberation because they are afraid that liberation will lead to women's promiscuous behavior. The more restrictions men impose on women, the stronger women's desire for transgression becomes. Women will seize any available opportunity to unbridle themselves. Similarly, even though stealing is fo rbidden, once the thief understands the value of the object, the desire to steal it will only be strengthened. Thus, it is confinement, not liberation, that leads to women's adultery. How can Chinese people say that liberation makes women

promiscuous? They do not understand the real cause. The more they fo rbid women's liberation, the more degenerate fe male virtues become. This is why Chinese women do not advance.

True liberation means complete freedom from all confinement. The contemporary Western marriage system is confined by conditions of power, wealth, morality, and law. Although the marriage is said to be voluntary, do all men and women in the West only marry for love? Men often seduce women with their wealth; women of wealthy fa milies are also able to attract more suitors. Sometimes, rich men even force poor women to marry them. This is the confinement of marriage by wealth. In some cases, men marry women of prestigious backgrounds as a means for their advancement; in other cases, men of prestige and women of low social status are not able to marry because of their class difference. This is the confinement of marriage by power. There is simply no marriage of freedom! Although women receive the same education as men do in modern societies ruled by law, they seldom have the chance to study politics and law, not to mention to be enrolled in army and police academies. Although women are said to have equal opportunity with men in the modern state governed by bureaucracy, they hold no public office. Gender equality exists only in name.

The liberation of women should bring women the enjoyment of true equality and freedom. The Western system today only brings women freedom and equality in name. The freedom they claim to have is not true freedom, but false freedom! The equality is false equality! Without true freedom, women lack full advancement; without true equality, human rights are not enjoyed by everybody. Asian women, in awe of the development of Western civilization, believe that Western women are liberated and share fu ll freedom and equality with men. They want to fo llow the fo otsteps of Western women. Al as! As we are in the era of women's revolution, I do not want women to have only fa lse freedom and false equality; I strongly hope women will obtain true freedom and true equality!

In recent years, people began searching fo r women's liberation in Chinese society. Women's liberation can be achieved either actively or passively. What does achieving liberation actively mean? It is when women strive for and advocate their own liberation. What does achieving liberation passively mean? It is when liberation is granted to women by men. Chinese women's liberation today has been mainly promoted through the passive way. When most of the advocates of the women's liberation movement are men, women do not gain as much as men. Why have men, who in the past wholeheartedly promoted female confinement and fe male constraint, turned to support women's liberation and gender equality in recent years? There are three explanations. Firstly, Chinese men worship naked power. They believe that China should follow the system of the major civilizing fo rces ofthe world, such as Europe, America, and Japan. If Chinese men fo rbid the practice of fo otbinding among their wives and daughters, put them in school, and have them educated, then China would be considered civilized. Chinese men would enjoy the fa me of civilization, and so would their fa milies. When those "civilized" men appear in public with their "civilized" wives and daughters, they will be applaUded fo r their accomplishment. Do those men promote women's liberation fo r the sake of women? They only use women to achieve their own fa me. Their selfish concern proves that they treat women as their private property. If women's advancement did not affect their reputation, they would not be so interested in women's liberation. Chinese men's privatization of women was first manifested in their effort to confine women in the old society oftradition; it is now demonstrated by their plea for fe male liberation on the Western model.

Secondly, Chinese men's promotion of women's liberation has to do with China's economic stagnation. Middle-class fa milies have difficulty supporting their female members. Men realize that they do not gain from the confinement of women; instead it devastates their economy. So they advocate women's independence and see women's economic dependence on men as their worst enemy. Chinese men encourage their daughters to enter girls' schools. Women from less affluent fa milies study handicrafts, such as embroidery, knitting, sewing and cooking. The fo rtunate ones enter teachers' schools. The more advanced women receive professional training, such as medicine and science, outside the regular curriculum. Men promote female education not fo r the betterment of women but fo r their own advantage. Upon their graduation, women can afford to live on their own by becoming teachers or skilled workers. They are also forced to support their fa milies. With their daughters now sharing the fa mily burden, or even becoming the major breadwinner, men can enjoy more of their leisure time or use their money on their mistresses and prostitutes. While men indulge in pleasure without restraint, their daughters suffer from the solitude of hardship. Men advocate women's independence fo r men's own profit. That is the second reason why Chinese men promote women's liberation.

Thirdly, Chinese men value fa mily and have great expectations for their offspring. However, they are not competent to deal with the task of managing the household and raising the children all by themselves. They want women to take the responsibility. Therefore, home economics becomes the most popular subject in girls' schools in China. Even China's newly established party (the Revolutionary Alliance) has claimed that domestic education is the foundation of all education. It is implied that a civilized woman can manage her household better than a backward woman; a civilized woman can educate her children better than a backward woman. In fact, the family belongs to the man, so taking care of the fa mily is like serving the man; the children also belong to the man because they adopt their father's surname instead of their mother's. That is why men want to use women for their own purpose. In conclusion, the above three reasons demonstrate that men selfishly take advantage of women's liberation. They claim to help women obtain independence and become civilized; however, they promise women hope ofliberation but actually thrust women into hardship. In traditional society, men had superior status to women but women enjoyed more physical freedom and leisure time; in today's society, men are still superior to women, although women share men's work and men share women's pleasure. Why should women fe el happy about being used by men? Foolish women praise men fo r initiating women's liberation. They do not realize that they are doing exactly the same as those who highly praise the Manchu constitutionalists. The Manchu have drafted a constitution, but they are not willing to grant political power to the people. Similarly, men's promotion of women's liberation does not mean women will gain real power from men.

I am not saying that men should do all the work, nor am I suggesting that women's rights should not be expanded and women should perform their duties willingly. What I am arguing is: the women's rights movement should be fought for by women, not be granted by men. If women take orders from men, they have already lost their own freedom; if women receive rights from men, they have already become men's dependents. When women's liberation is in the power of men, men take advantage of women and ultimately subordinate women to them. This is why I advocate that women should seek their own liberation without relying on men to give it to them. Today Chinese women all look to men as the answer to their liberation. They are willing to take a passive role because they lack self-consciousness. Without self-consciousness, women are manipulated by men and yet they honour men. Aren't these women the most shameless?

I have talked about the drawbacks of women's passive liberation. Undoubtedly, there are some Chinese women who have longed for freedom and equality and do not want to be restrained by traditions. Their promotion of liberation seems to be conducted by their own will. However, we need to explore th eir true motivation. What they really want is to indulge themselves in unfettered sexual desires in the name of freedom and equality. TIley narrowly interpret liberation as the way to set free sexual desires. They do not understand that true liberation can only be achieved if women advance themselves to gain the power of transforming society. When women are only interested in love and sex, their spirit of saving mankind will be replaced by excessive desires and therefore their mission will not be accomplished. It is justifiable if women's obsession comes from their pursuit of free love. But very few Chinese women fit into this category. Some simply cannot resist temptation and will go with any man; some are seduced and become decadent. Some trade their bodies for wealth: they either make money through prostitution or by coquettishly flirting with rich men. To disgrace oneself in pursuit of wealth is the most degrading behavior. Can we call such conduct an act of freedom? Moreover, since the term "liberation" originally meant to be free from slavery, how can we make a connection between prostitutes and liberated women? Those women mistake liberation for sexual indulgence, so it is difficult for them to realize that they have already become the most debased prostitutes.

Today Caucasian women understand the drawbacks of gender inequality and identifY the uneven distribution of power as the origin of gender inequality. They form organizations to strive for women's suffrage.

The majority of women are already oppressed by both the government and by men. The electoral system simply increases their oppression by introducing a third ruling group: elite women. Even ifthe oppression remains the same, the majority of women are still taken advantage of by the minority of women.

When a few women in power dominate the majority of powerless women, unequal class differentiation is brought into existence among women. If the majority of women do not want to be controlled by men, why do they want to be controlled by women? Therefore, instead of competing with men for power, women should strive for overthrowing men's rule. Once men are stripped oftheir privilege, they will become the equal of women. There will be no submissive women nor submissive men. This is the liberation of women. This is radical reform. Why should we be content with the existing parliamentary system and the suffrage movement as the ultimate goal? Only if interested women could transform their movement from that of entering the government to exterminating the government!

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